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10 Years Into Revolution, Flagging Mozambique Reconsiders

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MAPUTO, Mozambique—It has been 10 years since the Portuguese colonists who clung to this long, narrow Indian Ocean coastline for five centuries departed and revolutionaries who had spent a decade in the bush took power, launching a crusade to create Marxism's "new man" in Africa.

The sign greeting arrivals at Maputo's airport still reads, "Welcome to Mozambique: A Liberated Zone of Humanity." But the search for the "new man" and the socialist ideal he embodied has been suspended, if not scrapped, as Mozambique struggles to survive.

Ten years of war, misguided policies, cruel weather and hostile neighbors have combined to smother dreams and render ideology an unaffordable luxury.

"On a continent bludgeoned by poverty, famine and despair, few countries have been more battered than Mozambique.

The country is locked in a civil war with the well-equipped and often well-trained rebels of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), whose lifelines extend abroad. Drought has helped destroy Mozambique's farms, killed 100,000 of its peasants and displaced hundreds of thousands of others.

This once beautiful seaport capital has become a city of empty shelves, worthless currency and deserted cafes, where people line up for hours for a rationed quantity of life's bare essentials. Even among the intellectuals who once celebrated Mozambique's revolution as the birth of a new age, there is a grow-

ing sense of pessimism and disillusion, fueled by the daily grind of shortages, electric power cuts and the search for enough to eat.

Still, although wounded, Mozambique has not been killed. Its leaders are pursuing the road to pragmatism with the same fervor that once infused their search for the classless society. Having lost the first round, they have launched a second with new rules and new possibilities.

In the past year, Mozambique has signed a nonaggression pact with neighboring South Africa, its former implacable foe, promoted a return to "privatization" in its farms and fac-

ories, joined the World Bank, submitted its books to the International Monetary Fund and allowed western relief agencies to play an increasing role in its emergency aid programs in drought-stricken areas.

In return, western bankers have rescheduled \$300 million in debt payments, and western nations, led by the United States, have increased contributions of food and other aid dramatically.

The gamble has yet to pay off. If anything, the past year has seen further deterioration of security and a decline in the economy. But hope, Mozambique's last abundant commodity, has not departed yet.

"We are mutants in Africa," said Carlos Cardoso, director of the state-owned Mozambique Information Agency and one of the theoreticians who have struggled to keep the dream alive. "There is no one else like us. Economically, we make no sense. Technically, we were the most backward nation in Af-

rica. But politically, we are still the most advanced."

When 200,000 Portuguese colonists fled Mozambique in 1975, they took everything they could carry, including their money, possessions and expertise. Much of what they could not carry, they destroyed—industrial equipment was sabotaged, phones ripped out, tractors driven into the sea, even light bulbs smashed. They left behind 12 university graduates in a nation of more than 10 million people.

Faced with this barren inheritance, the leaders of Frelimo—the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique—embarked on a vast project to create a modern industrial economy where only a feudal brand of colonialism had existed.

Eager and ambitious, they built hundreds of schools and health clinics. They tried to take economic shortcuts, using an Eastern European blueprint: large state-run factories and farms operated on production schedules dictated by a centralized authority. They felt that

the approach had worked in Prague, Leipzig and East Berlin. But there were enough trained managers and adequate resources there. In Maputo, where there were neither, it failed.

Industrial production, which had collapsed during the last two years of the liberation war, began a slow climb back in the years up to 1981. But then, damaged by war and world recession, it fell 4 percent in one year. It continues to decline.

By the end of 1982, according to American journalist Joseph Hanlon in his book "Mozambique: The Revolution Under Fire," production of textiles was only 60 percent of that in 1973, the last full year of colonial rule. Cement production was 44 percent, and bicycle manufacture was 38 percent.

But the most negative impact of state control occurred in the countryside, where 85 percent of Mozambique's population works and lives. Forced movement into villages, designed both to impose collectivization and improve the delivery of such social services as health clinics and schools, moved many off their land. State-run farms soaked up virtually all government investment in agriculture.

Food prices were kept artificially low, providing a disincentive to farmers to produce. Those who did found that the money they were paid was worthless and that there was nothing to buy in traders' shops taken over by the state.

Food began to disappear. Some of it went across porous borders to more profitable markets, some went into the growing domestic black market, and some was left to rot on the ground. Growth in official food production, which had increased during the late 1970s but not enough to match population growth, fell between 1981 and 1983.

"In the countryside you still see beautiful heads of cabbage, lettuce and vegetables," said an American economic analyst. "But none of it makes it to the official marketplace."

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The collapse of the rural economy has damaged virtually every region. "In Cabo Delgado, Mozambique's northernmost province, there is no drought, no famine and, until recently, no MNR" rebels, said Stephen Johnson, head of the Oxfam relief organization here. "But the province still needs disaster-style relief, because there is nothing there—no tools, no seeds, no fertilizer."

The collapse also left the country vulnerable to drought and provided fertile ground for the growth of the rebel Mozambique National Resistance. Although founded by the Rhodesian intelligence service under the former, white-minority government of what is now Zimbabwe and later adopted by South African military intelligence, the movement flourished in part due to rural disaffection among peasants, who joined either because they opposed Frelimo or simply because they had no other means of earning a livelihood. "We had to turn people away," recalled a former top official of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization who helped set up the movement.

The result of all these elements is visible in northwestern Tete Province, scene of starvation last year. Farmers in the province's northern Angonia area were producing significant food surpluses even while their neighbors south of the Zambezi River were dying of hunger. But the food went to nearby Malawi because rebels had choked off the roads leading to the south, and also because farmers got better prices and were able to barter for consumer goods there. Some of the grain purchased in Malawi by relief agencies supplying Tete with emergency food was actually grown in the province itself.

Against bread lines and shortages, western economic ideas are beginning to make an impact inside Mozambique, and the result is often unsettling. Americans and Europeans are searching for oil and natural gas off the coast. The U.S.

Agency for International Development, which shut down operations here in 1981 after four American diplomats were expelled on charges of spying for the CIA, has returned with an \$8 million aid program.

Most of the money is going toward the purchase of farm sup-

plies—tractors, trucks, seed and fertilizer—to revive Mozambique's moribund private farming sector.

The money is being concentrated in two areas—the Green Zone around Maputo and the Chokwe region of Gaza Province—that already are among the more successful farming regions. It will have no impact on areas where war and drought have taken their greatest toll.

"We had to choose areas we can closely monitor, and obviously there's no use in importing 25 tractors if they all get blown up," said an American official.

Not everyone is grateful for this new American largesse. In the Green Zone, peasants who have set up small cooperatives have complained in public meetings that private farmers are stealing their land with help from unscrupulous bureaucrats. They won support from Jorge Rebelo, the Frelimo party secretary for Maputo, who told a recent meeting that the peasants "have helped feed the capital, which is more than can be said for the less honest private farmers."

In towering modern high-rises, built by the Portuguese before independence and now owned by the state, live another group of westerners. The *cooperantes* are the thousands of westerners who have come to help the government. Most came for ideological reasons, because they saw in Mozambique, with its revolutionary fervor, the kind of society they believed in.

Now they fear that the revolution they have come to admire is being taken over by outsiders. They see western ideas about politics and economics gaining ascendancy.

What they lack is an alternative strategy. Having preached for years about the vitality of socialism, they now stand helpless before its corpse. So at night many of them huddle in their apartments—resorting to black-market candles when the power goes off, drinking European beer. They ridicule western relief workers who speak no Portuguese and speculate on how many are CIA agents.

Hanging over Maputo like a tropical rain cloud is the question: How long can Mozambique survive? Part of the answer lies with the man at

the top, President Samora Machel. Trim, purposeful, charismatic and endlessly optimistic, he in many ways personifies the spirit of Mozambique.

A farmer's son, Machel led Frelimo in its 10-year bush war, and he then set the country firmly on the socialist road. But he is no ideologue. The opening to the West and the signing of the Nkomati Accord with South Africa were his initiatives. If they fail, the failure will be his.

Machel has shown what some see as public signs of desperation. For a time two years ago, he endorsed public floggings of "economic saboteurs" and launched a campaign to evict forcibly thousands of unemployed people from Mozambique's major cities. Both measures have since been abandoned.

At a recent gathering of diplomats, he publicly ridiculed the Portuguese ambassador, expressing anger that the MNR still is allowed to operate in Lisbon with support from influential Portuguese businessmen and the alleged connivance of several Cabinet ministers.

Still, Machel endures in large part because almost everyone agrees there is no one else who can take his place. Even those who regret what he has done accept his

motives. If he goes, most here believe, the dream of Mozambique will go with him.

That dream is still on display in Inhambane at a place called "The Children's Garden," a small, dusty enclosure of a few scattered huts on the edge of town.

There are 101 children here between the ages of 1 and 12, orphans whose parents either died or abandoned them during last year's famine. There are estimated to be up to 3,000 others like them.

When they were brought here, director Armando William recalls, they were in desperate condition, suffering from malnutrition, scabies and hookworms. Three died shortly after they arrived.

The rest look much better now, although some clearly have suffered permanent mental and physical damage. They eat standing up because there are no chairs. Their only playground is the rusted shell of a discarded bus. They sleep two to a small cot, 25 crammed into each of the small round huts.

They are at once Mozambique's tragedy and its hope. They are scarred and wounded, but they have survived. In a nation that has been forced to live with war and famine, it is no small achievement.